

Castlemaine Naturalist

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Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.



White-browed Babbler at the Rise and Shine NCR,
September 11 - photo Noel Young

SEANA* in Castlemaine 4th-7th October 2019

Over the first weekend of October, Castlemaine Field Naturalists will welcome 115 fellow naturalists from 17 clubs across Victoria - from Portland to Albury/Wodonga, from Bendigo to Sale. The Campbells Creek Community Centre will be our base for the weekend, for evening meals and guest speakers on the Friday (Tanya Loos) and Saturday (Tim Entwistle). Thirty excursions have been arranged, from Saturday morning to Monday lunchtime, to show our visitors the wildflowers, birds, geology and impacts of mining in the Box-ironbark forests of our Central Goldfields region, the Moolort plains and in town.

Twenty one years ago CFNC hosted a “Field Naturalists Get-together” (before SEANA was formed) over the weekend 11-13 September 1998. It’s interesting to read the reports in the October ’98 edition of the *Castlemaine Naturalist*. Our president George Broadway (who was president then also) led a half-day excursion to see wildflowers along Fryers Ridge, and will be repeating this tour for our visitors this year.

Our thanks to the many local experts who have volunteered to lead excursions, and CFNC members who will lead or assist with excursions or help in many ways at the Community Centre over what will be a busy, and we trust stimulating and enjoyable weekend for our visitors.

*South East Australian Naturalists' Association Inc.

Habitat Restoration in the Mallee – landscape improvements over recent decades.

David Cheal, Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for Environmental Management, Federation University, has worked in the Mallee country of NW Victoria several times during his work as a botanist and ecologist. He spoke at our September meeting of the significant changes in the region since the Land Conservation Council investigations of the Mallee in the 1980s and the declaration of the Hattah-Kulkyne NP in 1980 and the Murray-Sunset NP in 1991.

What was the landscape and vegetation like before pastoralists and then sheep and especially rabbits devastated the country? Healthy similar semi-arid woodland in WA suggests a diverse flora with small trees such as Sugarwood *Myoporum platycarpum* above chenopod and other shrubs covering the ground, in stark contrast to the almost treeless, nearly bare semi-arid “woodland” of the Murray-Sunset area in the 1980s. Small nature reserves such as the Belah woodland at Yarrara reserve and the pine woodland at Cowangie Bushland Reserve are valuable indicators of the original habitat.

In 2006, 20 years after his involvement with 1986 surveys David Cheal returned to reassess 29 floristic quadrats in the Murray-Sunset NP and 18 in the Hattah-Kulkyne NP, following decades of effort by small groups of Parks Vic. and Environmental Department (now DELWP) staff to restore habitat. The results in the Murray-Sunset were encouraging in the woodlands, with substantial increases in perennial species, perennial cover and small shrubs – but not in the chenopod shrublands in Murray-Sunset. In contrast, the improvements in Hattah-Kulkyne were hardly significant, although total vegetation cover had increased through the spread of Slender-leaf Hopbush, *Dodonea viscosa*. Recovery of tree species is variable, with some encouraging growth of young trees in some places.

These improvements were achieved through the removal of sheep and other stock, control of kangaroo numbers and the drastic reduction in rabbit numbers following the introduction of the rabbit haemorrhagic disease. Rabbit and kangaroo numbers remained low in the Murray-Sunset NP, but recovered in the Hattah-Kulkyne following the start of a fox baiting program there in the early 2000s, and restrictions on warren destruction to protect potential archaeological sites.

So while much has been achieved, landscape and habitat restoration are very long-term challenges. David argued that the results so far are first steps – long term plans based on science work must have long-term, secure budgets and a continuing vision from governments, with long-term support for the departmental staff responsible for the restoration and maintenance of our national parks and reserves. Patience is needed, and confidence that such plans can succeed. Both the general public and our political leaders need the vision and commitment necessary to sustain long-term restoration of landscapes and habitats.

Dianne Thomson and Peter Turner



Amyema linophyllum (Buloke Mistletoe) and *Jasminum didymum* (Desert Jasmine). These photos by David Cheal represent two of the rare plant species found in these semi-arid woodlands.

Wednesday Wildflower Wander – 11 September 2019

Leaders: Rosemary and Peter Turner

The first WWW for the year was to Kalimna Park, for the circuit walk starting near the northern most golf links fairway. We followed the track heading north along the eastern side of the hill, crossed the road and back along the western side. Six members saw a pleasing number of plants in flower, and some developing buds. The most exciting was the group of Golden Moth orchids on the eastern slope; in contrast most of the Leopard Orchids were along the western track. Many *Drosera aberrans* – Scented Sundew leaves were observed.

These hillsides are often very quiet, but we noted a few birds including magpies, white-throated treecreepers, raven, two choughs and, back at the cars, a pair of black-faced cuckoo-shrikes. Greenhood-whisperer Marli then directed us further north along the road, to a very substantial display of Nodding Greenhoods. Thanks to Richard Piesse for the plant list.

| Plants in flower: | |
|---|---|
| <i>Wurmbea dioica</i> – Early Nancy | <i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i> – Gorse Bitter-pea |
| <i>Hypoxis glabella</i> – Tiny Star | <i>Hardenbergia violacea</i> – Purple Coral-pea |
| <i>Caladenia fuscata</i> – Dusky Fingers | <i>Hovea linearis</i> – Common Hovea |
| <i>Diuris chryseopsis</i> – Golden Moth | <i>Prostanthera denticulata</i> – Rough Mint-bush |
| <i>Diuris pardina</i> – Leopard Orchid | <i>Rhytidosporum procumbens</i> – White Marianth |
| <i>Pterostylis nutans</i> – Nodding Greenhood | <i>Grevillea alpina</i> – Downy Grevillea |
| <i>Craspedia variabilis</i> – Billy Button | <i>Hakea decurrens</i> – Bushy Needlewood |
| <i>Microseris walteri</i> – Yam Daisy | <i>Philotheeca verrucosa</i> – Fairy Wax-flower |
| <i>Drosera auriculata</i> – Tall Sundew | |
| <i>Drosera macrantha</i> – Climbing Sundew | |
| <i>Tetratheca ciliata</i> – Pink Bells | Plants in bud: |
| <i>Acacia acinacea</i> – Gold-dust Wattle | <i>Arthropodium strictum</i> – Chocolate Lily |
| <i>Acacia aspera</i> – Rough Wattle | <i>Dianella admixta</i> – Black-anther Flax Lily |
| <i>Acacia dealbata</i> – Silver Wattle | <i>Glossodia major</i> – Wax-lip Orchid |
| <i>Acacia genistifolia</i> – Spreading Wattle | <i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i> – Grey Everlasting |
| <i>Acacia pycnantha</i> – Golden Wattle | <i>Senecio phelleus</i> – Slender Groundsel |
| | <i>Stackhousia monogyna</i> – Creamy Candles |



WWW 1 – photos by Peter Turner at Kalimna Park



Diuris chryseopsis – Golden Moth



September excursion to Eureka Reef (14/9/19)

Peter Turner

A perfect sunny afternoon for 13 field naturalists to wander around the Eureka Reef trail, plant lists and leaflets about the numbered sites in hand. The plant experts found several species not on the list prepared years ago, while we all enjoyed the plants that were in flower – especially the many *Drosera auriculata*, Tall Sundews, spread across the hillside. A Grey Shrike-thrush had welcomed us at the carpark, and by the end of the two hour ramble, we had a respectable list. A Buff-rumped Thornbill nesting in a small tree hollow, and excellent views of a Fantail Cuckoo were highlights, along with a pair of Striated Pardalotes complaining loudly when we inspected the tunnel entrance, where they appeared to have a nest. This was a trial run for two of the SEANA excursions, and we hope that the weather will be as kind early in October.

Bird List

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Galah | Yellow Thornbill |
| Crimson Rosella | Buff-rumped Thornbill |
| Pallid Cuckoo | Superb Fairy-wren |
| Fan-tailed Cuckoo | White-throated Treecreeper |
| Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo | Spotted Pardalote |
| Grey Fantail | Striated Pardalote |
| Scarlet Robin | Yellow-faced Honeyeater |
| Grey Shrike-thrush | White-winged Chough |
| Weebill | Pied Currawong |
| Striated Thornbill | Australian Magpie |

Plant list for Eureka reef

George Broadway

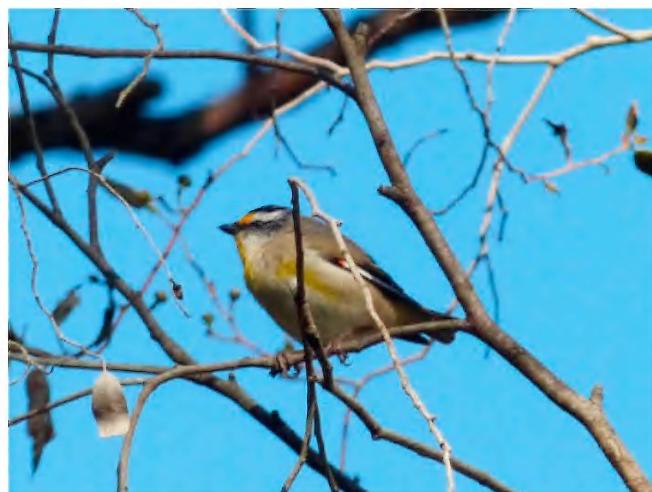
*Acacia acinacea, Acacia baileyana, Acacia dealbata, Acacia pycnantha
Burchardia umbellata, Caladenia carneae, Craspedia variabilis,
Cymbonotus preissianus, Daviesia ulicifolia, Drosera peltata, Hardenbergia
violacea, Hovea heterophylla, Rhytidosporum procumbens*

Added to original plant list -

*Hypoxis glabella, Wurmbea dioica, Romulea rosea, Geranium gardneri ?,
Pterostylis nutans, Microseris lanceolata*



The Fan-tailed Cuckoo – Peter Turner



Striated Pardalote at the tunnel – Noel Young

Wednesday Wildflower Wander – 18th September 2019

Peter Turner



P. nutans (our club emblem)
photo by Noel Young

Eight members and one visitor explored two patches of the woodland along Youngmans Track on the second of this year's wildflower wanders. Our first stop was at a parking spot a few hundred metres along the track. We then moved on to the junction with Escape Track, where the flowers of the Goldfields Grevillea *Grevillea dryophylla*, stood out in the late afternoon sun. A reasonable list recorded by Richard Piesse, including several patches of Greenhoods, but none of the Gnat Orchids seen in previous years.

As well as the list below we also found many leaves of *Drosera aberrans* – Scented Sundew; many *Glossodia major* – Wax-lip Orchid in bud, and the exotic *Claytonia perfoliata* – Miners Lettuce, in flower.

| Plants in flower: | |
|---|---|
| <i>Wurmbea dioica</i> – Early Nancy | <i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i> – Gorse Bitter-pea |
| <i>Cyanicula caerulea</i> – Blue Caladenia | <i>Hardenbergia violacea</i> – Purple Coral-pea |
| <i>Caladenia fuscata</i> – Dusky Fingers | <i>Gonocarpus tetragynus</i> – Common Raspwort |
| <i>Caladenia pusilla</i> – Tiny Pink Fingers | <i>Rhytidosporum procumbens</i> – White Marianth |
| <i>Glossodia major</i> – Wax-lip Orchid | <i>Grevillea alpina</i> – Downy Grevillea |
| <i>Diuris pardina</i> – Leopard Orchid | <i>Grevillea dryophylla</i> – Goldfields Grevillea |
| <i>Pterostylis nutans</i> – Nodding Greenhood | <i>Philoteca verrucosa</i> – Fairy Wax-flower |
| <i>Pterostylis nana</i> – Dwarf Greenhood | |
| <i>Microseris walteri</i> – Yam Daisy | Plants in bud: |
| <i>Drosera auriculata</i> – Tall Sundew | <i>Arthropodium strictum</i> – Chocolate Lily |
| <i>Drosera macrantha</i> – Climbing Sundew | <i>Thelymitra</i> sp. (possibly <i>T. megcalyptra</i> – Scented Sun Orchid) |
| <i>Tetratheca ciliata</i> – Pink Bells | <i>Ozothamnus obcordatus</i> – Grey Everlasting |
| <i>Acacia acinacea</i> – Gold-dust Wattle | <i>Senecio phelleus</i> – Slender Groundsel |
| <i>Acacia aspera</i> – Rough Wattle | <i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i> – Tall Bluebell |
| <i>Acacia pycnantha</i> – Golden Wattle | <i>Stackhousia monogyna</i> – Creamy Candles |
| <i>Acacia genistifolia</i> – Spreading Wattle | |

Photo Observations



Shining Bronze-cuckoo and Diamond Firetail
at Vaughan August 17 – Noel Young

Some pictures taken by Zoe Thomson on Dianne Thomson's Trust For Nature property recently – a rich patch of native vegetation.



Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists

Coming events

Wednesday Wildflower Wanders continue on October 2nd

October 4 – 7 SEANA in Castlemaine*

*Please note – there is no general meeting or excursion planned for October

Fri November 8 meeting: speaker ELAINE BAYES

Sat November 9 field trip: E C butterfly search? With Elaine Bayes

Monday 11th November: Roadside cleanup - Organiser Geoff Harris

Fri Dec 13 meeting: Member's night and break-up

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Club website (Web master: Ron Wescott) - <http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/>

Subscriptions for 2019

Ordinary membership: Single \$35, Family \$50

Pensioner or student: Single \$25, Family \$30

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

2019 Committee

President: George Broadway 5472 2513

Vice President: Dianne Thomson

Secretary: Peter Turner 5470 6891

Treasurer: Geoff Harris 0418 392183

Sue Albert Richard Piesse 0448 572 867
Noel Young (Editor) 5472 1345

[email newsletter material to: noelyoung@outlook.com.au]

**Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc. PO Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.
Inc #A0003010B**